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# A Psychoanalytic Reading of William Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience

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**A Psychoanalytic Reading of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience***

Serenah Minasian

A thesis submitted to the University Honors Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors Certificate with Thesis

Southern Illinois University

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## **Preface**

William Blake was a man viewed quite intensely by the public eye. He was judged not only as a writer but also as a painter. The well-known Romantic, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, described Blake as “a man of Genius” (Coleridge 13). So, what made this man known as William Blake “a man of genius”? Why did some others not have such approving commentary regarding Blake? I think it is because many saw Blake’s views and expression to be different in comparison to their own. In 1809, Robert Hunt described Blake as “an unfortunate lunatic” (Hunt 12). Hunt’s opinion of Blake shows the displeasing negative aspect of criticism on Blake, while Coleridge’s statement shows the tremendous support and praise received. Categorizing Blake as a writer and an artist is an unreachable task due to the positive and negative sway of scholarly criticism. In order to perform further analysis of Blake, I will intricately study his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.

Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* was first published as a whole in 1794. Blake’s work first began as *Songs of Innocence*. “[I]n 1789 Blake issued the *Songs of Innocence*, his first example of Illuminated Printing” (Burdett 41). There was a 5-year gap between the writing of both works. “Blake not only waited until 1794 to etch his [*Songs of Experience*], he apparently waited until 1793 to compose them” (Hirsch 16). Blake first composed his *Songs of Innocence* and waited years later to write the other poems in the pair but they were eventually published as a whole. Several years later in 1863, Alexander Gilchrist provided criticism on these works by stating:

To me many years ago, first reading these weird Songs in their appropriate environment of equally spiritual form and hue, the effect was as that of an angelic voice singing to oaten pipe, such as Arcadians tell of; or, as if a spiritual magician were summoning before human eyes, and through a human medium, images and scenes of divine loveliness; and in the pauses of the strain, we seem to catch the rustling of angelic wings. The Golden Age independent of Space or Time, object of vague sighs and dreams from

many generations of struggling humanity- an Eden such as childhood sees, is brought nearer than ever poet brought it before. (Gilchrist 20)

Gilchrist is highlighting the spiritual elements of the work and depicting them to be very extravagant. Also, Gilchrist is describing Blake's depiction of childhood and giving this state of childhood Edenic qualities. Providing early criticism of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Dante Gabriele Rossetti; the Pre-Raphaelite, painter, poet, and brother of Christina Rossetti, says:

The first series is incomparably the more beautiful of the two, being indeed almost flawless in essential respects; while in the second series, the five years intervening between the two had proved sufficient for obscurity and the darker mental phases of Blake's writing to set in and greatly mar its poetic value. This contrast is more especially evident in those pieces whose subjects tally in one and the other series. (Rossetti 21)

Rossetti vividly criticizes Blake's innocent series and experienced series in contrast to one another and provides again another distribution of praise towards Blake. Many writers and critics describe Blake as an artist and a poet but only a small amount provide scholarly conversation on his works from alternate perspectives; therefore, there is a need to enter the scholarly conversation from the not prominently studied approach among Blake critics, psychoanalytic theory.

Viewing literature from a psychoanalytic perspective broadcasts several ways to interpret and understand a work. An individual's psychological self is a tremendous part of everyday life. Whether a person behaves in a certain way or another type of way could be due to the early experiences they suffered from which affected their mental self. Psychoanalytic critics look for these psychologically shaping aspects and analyze the nature of the effect. I will be focusing most on the Freudian and Jungian theories of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is defined as "an insight therapy based on the theory of Freud, emphasizing the revealing of unconscious conflicts; Freud's term for both the theory of personality and the therapy based on it" (Ciccarelli and White

578). Sigmund Freud's work is the basis of psychoanalysis and heavily focuses on the unconscious and "Freud stressed the importance of early childhood experiences, believing that personality was formed in the first 6 years of life; if there were significant problems, those problems must have begun in the early years" (Ciccarelli and White 10). Along with Blake, Freud's theory heavily relates to the events that occur within childhood. Freudian psychoanalysis will help to guide my research because of Blake's focus on consciousness and the factors of childhood and adulthood.

In addition to Freud, I will be involving the beliefs of Carl Jung. Jung did not agree completely with Freud in all aspects, "According to Jung, the collective unconscious contains a kind of 'species' memory, memories of ancient fears and themes that seem to occur in many folktales and cultures. These collective, universal human memories were called archetypes by Jung" (Ciccarelli and White 508-509). Jung's theory provides a more social look at the unconscious and the elements within it. In addition to Jung, Freud will contribute towards my psychoanalytic viewing of one's state of being. Also, I will discuss the Freudian family romance which is essentially the idea that the biological father figure is ultimately God. Jung will be referenced heavily in regard to dreams and religion. Both Freud and Jung vastly impact individuals both in the past and present with their research and composed theories. There is the presence of a line of agreement and disagreement that stands between the two of them. I will be viewing Blake's works from both a Freudian and Jungian approach despite the differences and similarities. With Blake's beliefs in mind, I believe that psychoanalysis must focus on one's conscious and unconscious, one's childhood, one's adulthood due to their past experiences, and how all of these aspects of life impact an individual's entire self and the others around them. In

Blake's works, I will be analyzing the psychoanalytic elements that are present and develop an unexplored, fresh understanding of them.

Exploring the works of Blake from a psychoanalytic perspective has not been a sector of scholarly focus. Some research and analysis regarding Blake and psychology does exist, but I will be viewing Blake's works by psychoanalysis, which minimally exists. In *A Brief Introduction to Psychoanalytic Theory*, the author, Stephen Frosh, defines psychoanalysis by saying "The body of theory derived from the work of Sigmund Freud emphasizing the existence and workings of a 'dynamic' unconscious" (6). To properly study Blake psychoanalytically I will be focusing on: childhood, adulthood, religion, sexuality, dreams, and imagination. I will provide analysis on both *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* by Blake. Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* are able to be viewed psychanalytically particularly because of his focus on childhood versus adulthood.

William Blake, artist and poet, was born on November 28<sup>th</sup> in the year 1757. Blake is the son of his mother, Catherine, and his father, James. Blake grew up in a household that contained many children. Blake's siblings from oldest to youngest include: James followed by John who passed away in early childhood, then comes William Blake himself, he is followed by John who was named after the previous John that had passed away, Robert follows and he is known by the name of "Bob," and finally the youngest child, Catherine (Burdett 2-3). Blake was later baptized on December 11<sup>th</sup> (Burdett 4). As a child Blake's brilliance and mysticism emerged, "On a third occasion, one bright morning in early summer, watching the haymakers at their work, the child sees angelic figures walking among them" (Burdett 4-5). Blake grew up seeing things others found to be avant-garde and simply different. Could Blake's first sighting of these Godly creatures have contributed to his religious beliefs in adulthood?

During his adolescence Blake decided to leave his previously attended art school and became an apprentice of James Basire (Burdett 19). Blake found himself to be “Lost in the corners of these old churches, Blake’s romantic imagination was completely Gothicised, and for the future he closed his mind to every other influence or interpreted it by the light of these impressions, for which he had been unconsciously prepared by the religious atmosphere of his home” (Burdett 22). Blake was on a religious journey and path to discover himself as a writer. In early adulthood, Blake had his first romantic engagement with Polly Wood (Burdett 31). Upon the falling out of Blake and Wood, Blake met Catherine Boucher in Battersea who became his wife in August of 1782 (Burdett 32). Blake taught his wife and provided her with a basic education, the two had a very good marriage and she fully believed in him (Burdett 33). Blake’s brother Robert had passed away and Blake’s demeanor had changed (Burdett 40). Blake claimed that his brother’s spirit had visited him after he had passed away when Blake was around 30 (Burdett 40). Also, he was inspired by Robert’s visit which led him to obtain the idea of how to capture his artwork that is placed side by side with the poems in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Blake had many experiences in his life that molded him into the person he was.

In 1794 Blake published his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* as a pair. In Blake’s earlier publication *Songs of Innocence* the work is very pastoral, bright, and child-like. In his *Songs of Experience* he takes on a darker mood, anxiety, reality, and the raw world is faced. Part One would be the dream and Part Two would be the nightmare that is truly reality. Throughout his life, William Blake faced challenges, love, loss, experience, happiness, and unhappiness, all of which molded him into the man he was that has still remained relevant to modern society. What made William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* so contradictory? I will



explore Blake's life and work from a viewpoint of psychoanalysis to discover the unknown truth behind his work.

## **Chapter I: Innocence and Childhood**

### **Childhood**

Childhood, a term used to describe the events in which an individual grew, learned, and ultimately left behind. Growing up it is impactful whether a child has a mother, father, siblings, and grandparents. Lacking one of these relationships can create changes in childhood that varies from individual to individual. Most children find a role model within their elders and this creates unbreakable bonds and strong relationships that an individual will carry with them into adulthood. Blake had many siblings and both a mother and father, similar to most familial households. What set Blake's childhood apart from others?

The location in which a child grew up makes a tremendous impact on how the child turns out. Whether a child grows up in a pastoral landscape or in a big city takes a toll on the childhood experience. Blake grew up in London and was near both country and city, "Camberwell, Dulwich, Sydenham, and Newington Butts were still villages, and an active child who lived in Golden Square could quickly reach the open fields from London" (Burdett 4). Blake as a child was exposed to both the rural London and the city. Exposure to both lifestyles can impact a child and continues to do so in modern society. Many parents choose to either raise a family in the city or in the country depending on the family's background and the desired setting that they want their children to be exposed to. Growing up in the city can show a child that life is not all pastures and is industrialized. Also, the city life shows the fast-paced side of life and the puny role that one individual truly serves in a community. City life in Blake's time was dirtier due to the area not having the amenities that society today does and it was often very crowded. Opposing this city life, the country life shows the importance of community and the reliance on all individuals within the community. Country life is usually associated with farming that must

be done for life to continue and for necessities to be obtained. This life in Blake's time was much cleaner, many people were sent to the country when they had diseases. This was done in hopes of the disease clearing up due to the better, less polluted air. I believe both lifestyles offer their pros and cons and shape the individuals that grow up in them. However, Blake may have had opposing views due to conflicting forces that caused people to leave the country and move to the city for work. Blake's home ground may affect his works and the views he has regarding life due to all he has witnessed and been a part of.

Exposure to both country and city environments provided Blake with experience. By growing up near churches, art, and pastoral scenes Blake was bound to be influenced by the landscape around him. In terms of location and culture, a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, William V. Silverberg writes, "Whether by conscious or unconscious design or by accident, children are exposed to experiences which are typical for the given culture" (39). In Blake's poem, "The Blossom" the reader is able to see this pastoral scene. Blake writes:

Pretty Pretty Robin  
Under leaves so green  
A happy Blossom  
Hears you sobbing sobbing (7-10)

The presence of a robin, green leaves, and blossoms creates a vivid image of nature. The location at which Blake spent his childhood is depicted in this poem. There is a presence of a relationship between two beings, one of which is crying and the other that is happy. Psychoanalytically viewing this poem entails that Blake may have felt sadness when seeing the departure of a young bird leaving the nest, relating to his potential emotions felt when he left home. Blake's poem "The Blossom" represents the bittersweet emotions felt when a child outgrows one location and must leave and carry on to its next journey in life.

## Innocence

When a child is first born everything is new. The newborn has not yet experienced a heart break, a loss, or any devastating event. Sorrow is not yet comprehensible for a newborn. Lacan discusses an idea that is very important in the psychological impact of childhood which is the separation from one's mother. "According to Lacan, the infant is born into an environment of loss, already cut off from something (the womb or the mother's immediate presence) but unable to articulate what this is" (Frosh 178). Blake's *Songs of Innocence* rejects this idea and implies that the infant enters the world innocent and sometimes still fully connected to their mother emotionally but their innocence is able to be compromised. Throughout childhood, life is a journey of new experiences that are whimsical and simple. Blake's description of childhood in *Songs of Innocence* is quite giddy and purely innocent. All things and beings surrounding the children in the poems are usually harmless and bountiful. In this innocent world pain is not yet comprehensible and neither is the separation from the familial world. Innocence is truly described in Blake's poem "Infant Joy."

In Blake's "Infant Joy" the ambiguous "I" Blake includes has just been borne into the innocent, whimsical world. Throughout this poem pure innocence is depicted when Blake writes, "I have no name / I am but two days old" (1-2). The child has just entered the world and is the representation of a purely innocent creation. In *Blake and Freud* by Diana Hume George, she discusses the presence of healthy family relationships that are in *Songs of Innocence*. Also, she discusses how everything is always joyful and simple and how if a reader struggles to see the *Songs of Innocence* in this way it is because they are an experienced reader. George also describes the absence of a biological father as able to be replaced with the presence of God (George 91). George describes how Freud viewed greed to be something that is forced upon a

child and that it was due to helpless nature of a child and how Blake had a similar belief (George 91). Such as the child in “Infant Joy” many children are born into amazing innocent lives but that does not last long. From the time a child enters the human world, the child’s automatically given innocence is compromised, the world takes its toll on all things despite the circumstances. Such as Blake and Freud both believe, the innocent individuals in the world are next in line to be consumed by the harsh real world.

Blake’s depiction of innocence is also depicted by the use of “Godly” references and symbols one would often acquaint with God and religion. “Spirit” is not always used by Blake but can be seen as synonymous with the religious wording that he does use to represent God or Jesus Christ. “The word ‘spirit’ possesses such a wide range of application that it requires considerable effort to make clear to oneself all the things it can mean. Spirit, we say, is the principle that stands in opposition to matter. By this we understand an immaterial substance or form of existence which on the highest and most universal level is called ‘God’” (*Psyche and Symbol* 62). In many of Blake’s works he uses terms that must be more deeply viewed. For example, “The Lamb” which is a common allusion to Jesus Christ is used numerous in his poems but what it refers to in each case is not certainly identical in each use. Sometimes “The Lamb” is referring to Jesus Christ and other times it may actually be a lamb. Blake does not blatantly reveal his references yet he provides us readers with these symbols but suggests, by the numerous usage, that we must go a step further and discover what he could be wanting us to think about. He puts the power of complete interpretation in the reader’s hands by using those symbols. Blake could simply be sharing his religious beliefs or encouraging the reader to step outside their beliefs and try to see the images in a different way. Despite his intention, the use of

religious symbols is quite numerous in his works and could be used to appeal to one's psyche depending on if the reader is innocent or experienced.

### **Imagination/Fantasy**

Blake was a writer that changed his society with his gift of writing that proved he was able to predict ideas that took place way after his time. His works can be viewed by using what we now know as modern psychoanalytic theory. In *Blake: A Psychological Study*, author W. P. Witcutt writes that, "[Blake's poetry] provides a kind of outline of the unconscious mind. Blake explored this strange region more thoroughly than any before or since, and what is more, he knew what he was doing" (18). In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Witcutt claims that Blake explored the realm of consciousness more than any others. Blake was a step ahead of his fellow poets and he managed to create an understanding of imagination and unconsciousness enabling his readers to experience it as well. In regard to unconsciousness, author of *The Unholy Bible*, June Singer writes:

Jung asserts that while mankind lives in the everyday, empirical world, it is not entirely of that world, but is connected by the slender filament of the symbol to a world beyond, which he calls the "collective unconscious." Unlike Jung, Blake did not theorize- he shaped myths and symbols to express his world-view. (ix)

Blake's imagination spread far and wide, heightening through his images and representations in his world. Jung discusses the unconscious world and how the real world goes on everyday but notes that there is a relation. Blake on the contrary, uses mythical elements and symbolic images to depict his beliefs. The use of these techniques is done often in his *Songs of Innocence*. Blake uses symbolic images in his works to bring the subconscious and his thoughts to life, even if they were completely unrelated to the other ideals of his time. Blake proves to be unafraid of the possible societal commentary that would have viewed him as peculiar and he never falls short of sticking to his views and is not afraid to speak his mind throughout his works.

A world full of peace and a presentation of the opinion of the speaker is present in Blake's poem "The Little Black Boy." Blake writes:

And we are put on earth a little space..  
That we may learn to bear the beams of love.  
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face  
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove. (13-16)

Blake's fourth stanza depicts a vision of a world full of love and acceptance. While one is present in the conscious real world, one can imagine a new Utopian ideal present in the speaker's unconscious. The speaker is dreaming of this change and push towards equality. Relating to Blake's speaker's want for equality is the creation of desire for unreal things to become reality, "Freud demonstrated the mental nature of the deepest layers of human existence, which flows from a source of energy whose scope of movement become hidden in the normal process of individual and cultural development" (George 76-77). When an individual imagines something in their unconscious mind there comes a want for it to become reality. As a reader, "[w]e are stuck with the images we know, but Blake presses them to our service in the attempt to imagine what might have preceded them" (George 77). Blake encourages his reader to imagine a world different from the one known and depicted in his poem; he challenges the reader's psyche. Blake again is asking his readers to go a step further and try to understand not only the words on the page but the way in which they can connect to the reality of the world.

By reading the poem as innocent readers, Blake's final two lines of the stanza have a depiction of individuals of different races and a comparison of one another to create unity and show equality. This is an idea that would have been way after Blake's time. Blake withheld what an individual living in the present would now describe as modern ideas and his ideas were very different from the views of his time. Lastly, Blake compares these differences to different locations, which shows that neither is more superior to the other. Blake is imagining a world free

of hate and discrimination. Imagining this place that Blake visualizes is a pure and hopeful mindset that he has and hopes others can possess too. He enhances his imagination by the use of symbolic elements such as location and racial demographics throughout the poem. Freud's theory about reality is present in this poem and this stanza shows Blake's wandering imagination and radical beliefs that all individuals should be equal and reach to achieve sameness in the real world.

Continuing in the poem, in the sixth stanza Blake expands on his idea of equality. He writes, "When I from black and he from white cloud free, / And round the tent of God like lambs we joy:" (23-24). The two children of different complexities have been shown as equal. They will both be accepted by God. Also, they will both be consumed in a presence of utter happiness. Blake's poem serves as an imagined and hopeful representation of abolition. Blake saw the world and its people in a different way than others. Blake saw both people to be equal and he fantasized that his imagination would soon become an actual reality.

## **Dreams**

Ambitions, unconscious thoughts, deep desires, or random ideas are all modern thought of as dreams. As some individuals sleep, they enter the realm of dreams. This mystical unreal stage of one's thoughts can also be reached while being awake. Day dreaming or deeply imagining, an individual may do this when their desires and ambitions take complete control of their mind. Dreams can be completely relatable to one's life or completely random; either way dreams are a complex psychological experience.

C.G. Jung psychologically studies dreams and helps individuals understand the significance and meaning of a dream. Jung discusses how all conscious aspects have an



unconscious aspect as well (*The Undiscovered Self* 66). But do all unconscious things have a conscious element? Jung answers this questions by stating that:

The unconscious part is a sort of afterthought, which may become conscious in the course of time by means of intuition or by deeper reflection. But the event can also manifest its unconscious aspect- and this is usually the case- in a dream. (*The Undiscovered Self* 66-67)

So, the unconscious and conscious are not directly parallel in comparison. Unconscious thought basically can be conscious after time, but it is not a guarantee. Relating to the two realms of consciousness, “The dream shows this aspect in the form of a symbolic image and not as a rational thought” (*The Undiscovered Self* 67). Dreams are unlike simple thought, they serve by use of complexity through images. Jung also discusses how dreams show “a greater variety and are often full of picturesque and luxuriant fantasy” (*The Undiscovered Self* 67). The fantastical aspect of a dream can be seen in some of Blake’s works.

Blake’s poem titled “A Dream” begins with a description of an event. Blake writes, “Once a dream did weave a shade, / O’er my Angel- guarded bed” (1-2). The first two lines express that at one moment in time the speaker had a dream that was in a way alarming. This dream took place while the speaker was asleep in their bed that is under God’s surveillance. The reader is introduced to a retelling of an unconscious event. The dream is of all of God’s children that are lost. Blake writes in his poem:

O my children! do they cry,  
Do they hear their father sigh.  
Now they look abroad to see,  
Now return and weep for me. (9-12)

The speaker appears to have consciously realized that he is also an individual who is lost. The speaker wanders and finds a glow worm, a watchman, and a beetle on the way home. The glow worm may represent the innocent, helpful, yet unaware soul. The watchman would represent the

guardian angel figure. The beetle would represent the lay man that is always out and about that an individual sees on their way home and the glimpse of them signifies that home is close by. The speaker's dream in this poem takes the reader through a series of events that are discovered unconsciously but may be real in conscious life. Blake is able to depict both sides of the psychological mind in this poem. Analyzing this poem presents an ability for the reader to see the many symbols used in the images which show both unconsciousness and consciousness.

When analyzing Blake's work "A Dream," there is the presence of other possible interpretations of the poem. In *Innocence and Experience: An Introduction to Blake*, E. D. Hirsh, Jr., analyzes this poem. In regard to line one of the poem, Hirsh states that "This is, first of all, a poem that every point celebrates the ideal of guardianship. The speaker's bed is guarded by angels as he sleeps" (203). This criticism shows the dream like state that Blake uses to tell a story. Next, Hirsh discusses the state of the one that is dreaming and how they are "both guarded and [a] guardian" (203). Hirsh discusses the poem to show how God cares for all and "[i]t is notable that this is the only dream in *Innocence* which is about the natural world" (205). Blake's poem taking place in the actual world shows the conscious elements that it possesses. It is taking place in an atmosphere that is most familiar to the speaker that they are immersed in every day. The event is an unconscious event that is taking place in an area where consciousness is present. This poem shows the incorporation of both consciousness and unconsciousness by use of location and the speaker's state of being. Blake's "A Dream" enhances the importance of both the unconscious and conscious and shows how they can, but are not limited to being present harmoniously.

## Religion

In modern times, religion is a huge part of everyday life of some individuals. Whether people follow a religion or do not follow a religion, they are both equally impacted by religion surrounding their lives in society. England in the eighteenth and nineteenth century had an established church and members of that church were privileged. Blake was surrounded by his religion and immersed himself in it. “[Blake] sought to interpret the Christian tradition solely by the works of art that it had inspired. A Christian by profession he never went to church” (Burdett 26). He worshipped and acknowledged his beliefs from art and his words. Blake was close knit with his faith even though he did not attend church, such as many Christians today. Blake’s religious beliefs heavily impacted his writing and his mind, many religious references are made in his *Songs of Innocence*.

In Blake’s poem titled “The Lamb” there is a prominent presence of Christian faith. Blake begins the poem by writing, “Little Lamb who made thee / Dost thou know who made thee / Gave thee life & bid thee feed (1-3). In these first three lines the speaker begins by telling the “Little Lamb” that they are a creator. Then, asking the “Little Lamb” who created them. Next, the speaker implies the inclusions of the creation being given one life and nourishing them. Following these lines Blake later writes, “Making all the vales rejoice: / Little Lamb who made thee / Dost thou know who made thee” (8-10). The speaker is stating that the lamb is the one that makes all of the vales cheer and be filled with joy. Once again, the speaker repeats the same lines in the beginning of the poem, emphasizing the creation and the creator being God. In the second stanza of the poem, Blake’s speaker reveals who the creator truly is by saying, “He is called by thy name, / For he calls himself a Lamb” (13-14). The “Little Lamb” and the “he” being referred

to both go by the name of a lamb, showing that the lamb represents Jesus Christ. Blake ends the poem by writing:

I a child & thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name,  
Little Lamb God bless thee,  
Little Lamb God bless thee. (17-20)

The speaker now is the “I” and states that they are a child and that the other subject in the poem is a lamb or Christ. The “we” used shows that the two subjects are classified as one and can be referred to by God’s name. The final two lines bless the speaker and the subject and the poem comes to a close. Blake includes very specific language within this poem to represent Christ within the Christian faith. This poem is capturing a child’s relationship to God and showing the child to be seen as both the lamb and a creation made in the image of God. Blake’s poem captures the core of Christianity, being the creation of all things by God. Also, the Lamb that is referred to being a distinct image of Christ. Blake’s work fully captures his religious views and presents the story of creation in a childlike way proving to be full of innocence, love, and simplicity.

Additional analysis of this poem exists in *Innocence and Experience*, by Hirsh. First, Hirsh begins by discussing the parallel relationship between the one asking questions and the one being questioned within the poem. He then discusses the inclusion of the lamb and the child that is meant to represent Christ and the joyful nature of the poem (177). Blake’s inclusion of the lamb and Christ as two separate subjects within the poem is a very interesting approach. He is using them to mirror one another and show the similar almost same aspects of both subjects. Discussing the subjects Hirsh writes, “the lamb both has delightful clothing and is clothed by God with delight; the phrase tries to identity the actual and the sacramental just as the poem identifies the child and the lamb” (178). The child and the lamb can be seen as a comparison to

the average individual and the sacrificial Christ. “Christ is our nearest analogy of the self and its meaning” (*Psyche and Symbol* 42). Psychoanalytically Christ can be used to show a parallel of the individual and Christ. Blake’s use of parallel to create an even deeper sense of religious views demonstrate the impact religion had on Blake not only as an individual but as a writer. Additional critique of this poem provides evidence as to why it is important to view religion and the psychological effects it had not only on Blake, but also on his works and his thoughts.

In *The Divine Imagination: William Blake’s Major Prophetic Visions*, author Ronald L. Grimes discusses Blake’s religious views and his literature. Blake is known to be a radical Christian and does not fail to make his beliefs evidently clear within his works especially *Songs of Innocence*. Grimes analyzes Blake’s religious inclusions and says, “For Blake, the difference between religion and poetry emerges only when each has ceased to be itself and vision has failed. At their visionary apex poetry and religion are the same for Blake” (170-171). Blake closely intertwined his religion and his poetry but still tries to keep both poetry and religion true to their own nature of being. He includes religion in his poetry and thinks of them both to be very important in his life. Blake’s religious beliefs started as a young child when he first started seeing figures that were angelic. This psychological impact on him as a child may have strengthened his religious beliefs as an adult and caused him to make sure to include these thoughts and views in his poetry. Religion shapes the way some individuals live, write, and think, it is truly the shell around a believer’s life that most people encounter in childhood. It is important to view religion in Blake’s works psychoanalytically to see that “[t]he psychological rule says that when an inner situation is not made conscious, it happens outside, as fate” (*Psyche and Symbol* 60). Religion can show the difference between tainted reality and the innocent pure

state of fate that can be seen in Blake's works. Blake kept his poetry, religion, and art very near to his heart and made no effort to hide it all from his readers.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Throughout the analysis of Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, the reader can gain new insights into the poems through the use of psychoanalytic theory. Childhood as a whole proves to be filled with various psychologically shaping experiences. Growing up in a household full of siblings, a mother, or a father makes all the difference in an individual's childhood and their eventual adult life. Learning more about the importance of family life and a child's background provides so much insight into their psyche. Blake's childhood is ultimately what shaped him into the man most literary scholars studied and either loved or hated. His impact on the literary canon possibly would not have been the same if he were raised differently or in a different society. Blake's childhood made him who he was and shows the importance of family and life before adulthood.

Mindset is another impactful aspect in life. Growing up, before adulthood individuals have an innocent mindset. Blake made sure to capture the sense of innocence in one's mindset to its full capability. In his poem "Infant Joy" he captures this innocent mindset and shares it with his readers. Childhood is the time where all is simple and joyous and Blake fully captures these feelings in his poems. Blake's poems depict the child to be innocent upon entrance to the natural world but how innocence is a state that is easily compromised. Blake utterly captures the childlike mindset and the sense of pure innocence that is withheld before advancing into adulthood.

Psychoanalytically viewing Blake's works the reader is able to see the prominent inclusion of imagination and dreams. Blake shares his imaginative world in his poems. He depicts the surroundings, appearance of subjects, and the time of occurrence in such detail. In his poem "The Little Black Boy" Blake ultimately shares with his audience his imagined world. He

shares his views of supporting abolition and hoping to achieve equality. Blake proves to be fully advanced in mindset for his time and would fit into modern society quite well.

Psychologically impacting his poems is the presence of both the conscious and unconscious. He shows both of these states in his imaginative and dream-like elements in poems. In his poem "A Dream" he enhances the division between the unconscious and the conscious by showing the speaker in the natural world and in a dream while sleeping. A psychoanalytic reading can illuminate aspects of Blake's poetry which cause his works to deepen on a level of interpretation and relation making them much more intriguing to a reader.

Religiously Blake is a devout Christian and he makes that very clear within his works. Blake heavily focuses on his poetry and his religion. Blake makes several references to Christian elements in his works. In his poem, "The Lamb" he creates heavenly images and creates two subjects in representation of Christ. Blake was very heavily invested in his works and never fails to include his religious beliefs within them. Growing up he was struck with visualizations of angels and heavenly creatures which surely added to his devout Christianity. Viewing Blake as a Christian provides an additional lens to view his works and also contributes heavily to the psychoanalytic viewing of his works. Blake's Christianity provides insight behind his psychological incorporation of father like figures that would ultimately represent God and his other religious elements. "Christ's curious rejection of Mary, which Blake read as a refusal to be tied to mortality. The analogue in every individual's life is the necessity to break free of the mother-child bond in order to achieve individual freedom, the liberty to go and grow one's own way" (George 99). Blake uses the biblical references to infer that one must separate from their family and find their own path within life. Religion provides Blake's works with more depth and



a heightened sense of spirituality and psychological realms of the conscious and unconscious mind and thoughts.

Blake's *Songs of Innocence* viewed psychoanalytically have shown the importance of childhood and how the differences that are involved in growing up truly make an individual who they are throughout their entire life. Also, the innocent mindset has now been viewed and shown to psychologically impact a child's entire life if their innocence is compromised. Next, psychoanalysis has shown the importance of imagination and how one's imagination can truly be their desired and intended ideal of how life should be. Dreams also helped to show the importance of psychoanalysis and the divide and presence of both unconsciousness and consciousness. Finally, viewing religion has shown the impact beliefs have on an individual and how it truly impacted Blake and his writing. Overall, by psychoanalytically viewing Blake's *Songs of Innocence* I have drawn conclusions regarding the potential change that would have been present in Blake as a person and as a writer if it were not for his upbringing and all of the unique influences and aspects in his life; all of which made William Blake the man that he was.

## **Chapter II: Adulthood and Maturation**

### **Adulthood**

Adulthood is the first step towards independence. As a child matures they eventually progress throughout life and become an adult. As an adult, an individual is faced with new challenges and new glory. Upon exiting childhood, an individual's innocence is compromised when entering adulthood. Adulthood includes but is not limited to: love, heartbreak, struggle, work, expenses, and loss. As an adult, one is expected to overcome good and bad times. Maturation occurs during the drift from childhood to adulthood. One child may mature faster than another causing them to enter adulthood sooner due to their sense of and exposure to experience. Blake separates an individual's two stages of life by the first stage being an innocent stage and the later being an experienced adulthood, but sometimes individuals do grow up too fast and reach experience sooner than others.

Experience is gained through living and shapes an individual's mentality. One's mentality is determined by their experiences and it truly affects them throughout their entire life. As an individual enters adulthood they often lose imagination. Also, there is a more realistic sense of life that is inhabited and religion is usually turned towards or run away from. In addition, the individual's experience is usually altered by love in some way. Finally, all of these elements or experiences are found in Blake's *Song of Experience* along with a shift of tone and change in language.

### **Loss of Imagination**

As an individual matures they usually lose their sense of imagination. Reality sets in and consumes one's thoughts, creating little room for imaginative thoughts anymore. Most poets and artists are somewhat childlike and have the most inventive imaginations opposed to an average

individual. All people are different and have their own sense of imagination no matter how big or small. In Blake's poem "Holy Thursday" imagination and its wonders have gone away. Blake writes:

Is this a holy thing to see.  
In a rich and fruitful land.  
Babes reduced to misery.  
Fed with cold and usurious hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?  
Can it be a song of joy?  
And so many children poor?  
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine.  
And their fields are bleak & bare.  
And their ways are filled with thorns  
It is eternal winter there. (1-12)

In the three stanzas Blake first describes the speaker to be seeing a land that is home to unhappy creatures. Next, his speaker questions the song that is heard and describes the previously presented land as "a land of poverty" (Blake 8). Finally, in stanza three the land is described in great detail that reveals that the sun never shines there, the fields are not plentiful, and it is a very undesirable place. It is described as "eternal winter," which shows that it is a cold, dark, and miserable environment. This poem depicts a realistic speaker in the first three stanzas; life is not always joyous and sunny. Blake experiments with the notion of lost imagination in this poem. He shows that the same speaker present in *Songs of Innocence* may again be presented as an experienced individual that sees things for what they are rather than imagining them to be what they are not. This poem heavily appeals to Blake's reader's psyche; his readers can see themselves in this work. Every day one is faced with the reality of the real world and cannot really change reality. By psychoanalytically viewing "Holy Thursday" the reader is able to see

themselves as an experienced partaker in life. An individual's mind can conceptualize one's own loss of imagination through this poem.

A loss of imagination can be seen in Blake's art as well; and there are many pairings in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* whose art can be compared. Two particular poems that are a pair that instantly struck me as quite intriguing were "Infant Joy" and "Infant Sorrow." "Every poem in *Songs*, it seems, asks the reader to examine the relationship of sound to sight" (Mandell 221). Blake provides us with both a poem and a piece of art to allow us to use both senses to our advantage. In *Songs of Innocence* the poem "Infant Joy" is told by the ambiguous childish voice. In the corresponding piece of artistry by Blake one can see the use of an angelic being. There is a flower that has bloomed and three individuals are standing within the raised flower. The three are elevated to show their possible inability to be tampered with. The ambiguous child speaker in the poem is shown being held by a mother-like figure but also is being guarded by the angelic figure. Blake proves to associate childhood with purity, innocence, and imagination. This piece is shown below:



(Figure One 25)

An overall presence of happiness has been evoked in the painting. Now contrasting Blake's innocent imagination in "Infant Joy," is the poem "Infant Sorrow." In this poem, the speaker seems to be mentally alone. Blake writes:

My mother groand! my father wept,  
 Into the dangerous world I leapt:  
 Helpless, naked, piping loud:  
 Like a fiend hid in a cloud. (1-4)

In this first stanza, the speaker's father is crying and the mother is frustrated but it is unknown as to why. In the piece of artwork (shown below) that is alongside this poem there is the presence of a very outraged child. The woman tending to the child could be the mother but it is not completely certain.



(Figure Two 48)

In addition, the background of the photo shows a realistic setting of the child wanting to separate from the mother and enter the world on its own. The two people in the photo are not surrounded

by angelic figures such as the “Infant Joy” painting. The lack of the angelic figures show the entrance to the real world. The child, mother, and father are all seemingly upset and the child’s action in the artwork shows the discontent. Blake’s “Infant Joy” and “Infant Sorrow” both show opposing sides of imagination. “Infant Joy” shows a child that is new to the world and is protected by God. “Infant Sorrow” shows a child in the real world that is full of sorrow and lacks the presence of a guardian. Blake’s art posits a deep importance in the viewing of his poems, in this case by viewing both poems alongside the art one can see the true loss of imagination. An individual’s expectation to separate from their family occurs in the shift from childhood to adulthood and the images show the mental and physical effect it has on an individual.

## **Dreams**

Throughout life an individual dreams; the content of one’s dreams may vary in childhood and adulthood. As one matures they are exposed to the world and the way the world truly operates. Once adulthood is reached some of the past innocent minded, child-like dreams seem to vanish. Most adults dream but sometimes in an unrealistic way that may still benefit one’s psyche. In *Dream Analysis* C.G. Jung says, “Very often the end of a dream can teach one something” (46). As one dreams the unrealistic beginning of a dream can result in a realistic lesson to learn from by the end, the conscious self would be the one learning though. Blake’s poem “The Angel” follows this unreal to real pattern. Blake writes:

I Dreamt a Dream! what can it mean?  
 And that I was a maiden Queen:  
 Guarded by an Angel mild;  
 Witless woe, was neer beguil’d!

And I wept both night and day  
 And he wip’d my tears away  
 And I wept both day and night  
 And hid from him my hearts delight

So he took his wings and fled:  
 Then the morn blush'd rosy red:  
 I dried my tears & armd my fears,  
 With ten thousand shields and spears.

Soon my Angel came again;  
 I was arm'd, he came in vain:  
 For the time of youth was fled  
 And grey hairs were on my head (1-16)

In the first stanza, the speaker declares that they have had a dream and then they question the significance of the dream. Next, the speaker describes an encounter with an angel that comforted them. By the third stanza the angel has left and the speaker is forced to encounter life by themselves. The angel returns and the speaker is forced to realize that life has passed by and now they are old and grey. The speaker's mentality is at first very unrealistic. The speaker is being watched over which may have been a real aspect of the actual world to Blake but not to most people. By the end of the poem the speaker has realized that they are a grown individual and must be independent. Also, they are forced with the harshness of aging which is referenced to by the presence of grey hair. The speaker has mentally and physically gone from being a part of a guided unrealistic version of life to the harsh realistic state of life.

Dreams are a very important aspect of psychoanalytic study. "[P]sychoanalysis provides tools for examining the unconscious investments that people have in artistic material- the patterns of desire and identification that lure audiences in and make the play of images and words seem meaningful" (Frosh 221). Psychoanalysis provides a lens for individuals to view literature and connect to it. By looking at the dreams present in Blake's work an individual can see the psychoanalytic aspects that effect the speaker and provide a drift from imagination to realism.

## Religion

Blake was a mystic in terms of his religious expression all of his life. Growing up he encountered many angelic scenes and claimed that his deceased brother even spoke to him. He did not stray away from his religious beliefs, if anything, Blake's beliefs only grew. Blake is religiously unlike most individuals in modern society. As a child many people are religious due to being brought up in a religious setting. An environment where the family members are believers of a faith often creates child believers who may stray away from their religion as they grow up. In some cases, religious children grow up to be religious adults and other times it is the opposite. On the contrary, Blake was a solid believer as both a child and an adult.

Viewing Blake's display of religion in *Songs of Experience* differs from his whimsical, pure, and innocent religious elements in *Songs of Innocence*. In Blake's poem "The Tyger" the speaker questions God and his creations. Blake writes:

What the hammer? what the chain,  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? what dread grasp.  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears  
And water'd heaven with their tears:  
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,  
In the forest of the night:  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? (13-24)

In the fourth stanza, the speaker continues questioning the creation of the tiger. "'The Tyger' consists entirely of unanswered questions" (Hirsh 244). Psychologically the speaker's adult mind is not content with any answers and never stops the questioning. The speaker is hungry for



knowledge which shows a difference opposed to child mentality. Most children will be satisfied with any answer from a superior, adults are not always the same though. Next, in the poem Blake's speaker asks if the same creator that created the lamb also made the tiger. The speaker is concerned with the thought of a God that creates all creatures despite their characteristics. The poem ends with the question of who is the tiger's creator and the question remains unanswered. As Jung states in *Psyche and Symbol*, "we understand an immaterial substance or form of existence which on the highest and most universal level is called 'God'" (62). When one's psyche questions something ultimately the question is directed towards the one that is ultimately the founder of existence, in this case being God which the speaker questions. The speaker's unknowingness can relate to an individual's place within their own thoughts regarding religion and their security or insecurity in their faith.

### **Sexuality**

Throughout adulthood an individual enters a new world of love. Separation from the familial scene upon entrance to adulthood provides one with a new understanding of love. Losing the child-like bond that is present between child and mother and child and father has a great effect on one's sexuality. Who one loves and why one loves them can be noticed in adulthood. Also, the implications of love can be determined. If an individual has trouble showing love or feeling love this can be a result of fault in the scene of familial love. I believe that Freud's theory was that essentially: many people who grow up without one parent often lack the intended love they are supposed to feel by the gender of the lost parent which creates them to seek attention from the given gender. Love is a feeling that is felt all throughout life but I will be viewing the implication of sexuality psychoanalytically in adulthood.

Blake was intensely in love with his wife and his religion. In many of his works there is the presence of love from God. Often times God is set up to be the father figure; many religions believe that God is the father and Blake exhibits this literally in some of his works. “Parental figures in the form of priest, father, nurse, and mother become the restrainers of youthful sexuality and individuation” (George 98). In Blake’s poem “To Tirzah” there is the presence of this Freudian family romance, therefore God is the replacement of the biological father. Blake writes:

Whate’er is Born of Mortal Birth,  
Must be consumed with the Earth  
To rise from Generation free:  
Then what have I to do with thee?

The Sexes sprung from Shame & Pride  
Blowd in the morn; in evening died  
But Mercy changed Death into Sleep;  
The Sexes rose to work & weep.

Thou Mother of my Mortal part.  
With cruelty didst mould my Heart.  
And with false self-deceiving tears.  
Didst bind my Nostrils Eyes & Ears

Didst close my Tongue in senseless clay  
And me to Mortal Life betray:  
The Death of Jesus set me free.  
Then what have I to do with thee?

It is Raised

a Spiritual Body (1-18)

The first stanza depicts a speaker who is wondering what their place in the world shall be. They are wanting to escape from their generation, meaning their familial bond. “The sex of the speaker in the poem is not specified; it might be either male or female, for each sex must reject the mother for its own psychic reasons. The bond with the mother is the earliest and in some ways the strongest of all bonds” (George 99). In stanzas two and three this idea of rejection is present.

The speaker is acknowledging the changing in their life and how their mother impacted their life thus far but is still breaking free from the maternal bond. George writes:

Blake's poem fits the first stage of the Freudian formulation very well in the girl's instance, for the speaker's tone is openly reproachful for the 'betrayal' to 'mortal life' – powerless, penisless life, in psychoanalytic terms. The vehement rejection of the mother is just as serious an issue for the boy, for different reasons. For him, according to Freud, it is perceived literally as a matter of life and death. (99)

Blake's poem shows the importance of gender and how in both cases when viewing gender from a binary standpoint, the male or female subject would face this challenge still. This poem shows the importance of gender within the poems and how one faces specific challenges due to their gender. Overall, gender can be seen as an experience due to how once one is truly aware of their gender the world around them changes and society expects different things from an individual simply due to their gender.

Many individuals grow up without a mother or father which is very relevant in Blake's time. Those individuals will find themselves searching for that feeling of lost love they never received. Blake sometimes replaces the familial bond with the love from God. In his poem "The Little Vagabond" the speaker finds safety and assurance in God and the church. Blake writes:

And God like a father rejoicing to see.  
His children as pleasant and happy as he:  
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the Barrel  
But kiss him & give him both drink and apparel. (13-16)

The speaker of the poem is speaking to their mother and describing the Church and comparing it to an Ale-house. Then by the final stanza the speaker depicts God as the father to all of the world. God is also described to clothe all and provide all with the necessities of life such as a father would do. "One of Blake's most consistent devices for authenticating either the vision of Eternity in *Innocence* or the vision of the natural paradise in *Experience* is to make the dramatic speaker of his poem a child whose innocence and direct access to the divine guarantee the truth

of what he says” (Hirsh 260). Blake is using the speaker to show the guarantees of God and all that he has promised for his children. Also, Blake uses God as the father figure which relates to the modern perception of God being the creator of all things proving him to be the ultimate father to many religions. Blake makes sure it is known that the speaker is very closely knit with his father and his religious beliefs (Hirsh 261). “The father figures in *Songs of Experience* are closely connected with priests, organized religion” (George 101). The use of a fatherly figure connects directly to God or men of God within Blake’s works. Correlating with the use of religion, Blake did not think worship must be done within the Church so this poem can provide a linkage between having God close to oneself even though one is not in a true place of worship. All in all, this notion of God as father is explained and shown as quite important in Blake’s works and in the psychoanalytic viewing of them.

## **Language**

Universally I believe language is one of the most impactful elements in a piece of literature. Language varies from place to place and shifts simply due to context and the desired audience. This language shift happens in Blake’s works as well as in other pieces of literature. While reading *Songs of Innocence* a reader is accustomed to the child-like, innocent, whimsical, and happy language that is used. All things are practically harmless and should be viewed through a child-like mindset. This perspective shifts dramatically when reading *Songs of Experience*, Blake now introduces the dark and dooming glimpses of the world. In the second half the people, places, and objects are not always as they seem and the world is not a place filled with joyful talking animals and loving people anymore. Blake’s drastic shift of language provides a realistic view of childhood versus adulthood and the road one takes during maturation.

While revisiting the poem “Infant Sorrow” the language struck me as quite mature in terms of what was intended versus what was occurring. The speaker is described as very dependent on their family still, which opposes the general idea of adulthood. “Freud is prone to dour pronouncements on the ‘stubbornness’ and ‘insubordination’ of the infant’s libido, which must be brought under control. But for Blake, the danger is in the deflection of impulse rather than its indulgence” (George 90). The speaker is quite cruel and is very angry. This shows the shift in language that describes this speaker. Opposing this poem is the previously discussed poem “Infant Joy.” In that poem, the speaker is quite joyful and truly happy. The language has definitely shifted from innocence to experience by the second half of the poems. Blake uses both poems to show the whimsicality of life in the beginning and the not so joyful turn of events that life has to offer to an individual that exceeds childhood.

Language continues to get dark within the *Songs of Experience*, the previous nursery rhyme sense of being is now completely gone. In Blake’s poem “A Poison Tree” Blake introduces a very uneasy speaker. Blake writes:

I was angry with my friend;  
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.  
I was angry with my foe:  
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I waterd it in fears,  
Night & mourning with my tears:  
And I sunned it with smiles,  
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,  
Till it bore an apple bright.  
And my foe beheld it shine,  
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole.  
When the night had veild the pole;  
In the morning glad I see,

My foe outstretched beneath the tree. (1-16)

Blake's speaker begins in stanza one by describing their feelings towards their friend and their foe. Next, the speaker provides a lengthy explanation of what they have been doing in order to provide care to their piece of flora that has not yet been described. In the third stanza, the growing object is shown to have "bore an apple" and the foe of the speaker is envious of their succession. Finally, in the final stanza, the speaker goes into the place that is home to their tree they have grown and become very happy due to seeing their foe has deceased beneath their tree. The speaker proves themselves to be a very cruel individual due to this happiness. Blake's language has shifted so much in *Songs of Experience* that now there has been an inclusion of death. Death of the speaker's enemy has provided him with content showing the malice of the poem and the ill will of the speaker. This poem provides an enhanced view of Blake's experienced language that shows a reader that not everyone in the world has pure intentions and one must always watch their back. An innocent reader would view this as a way to see the inhumanness of the poison tree but an experienced reader can see past that and realize that the one in the wrong is the speaker himself due to his cruelty and inhumanity. Psychoanalytically a child's mind would see the innocent scenario but a mature adult's psyche would see the cruelty which shows the difference in psyches based upon innocence or experience.

In Blake's poem "The Clod & the Pebble" there is once again a shift in language and an ability to read the poem as an innocent or experienced reader. "In myths and fairy tales, as in dreams, the psyche tells its own story" (*Psyche and Symbol* 72). When reading this poem, the reader's psyche decides which one they relate to. The poem begins by providing an in-depth depiction of two types of people. The first type of person is described by:

Love seeketh not Itself to please.  
Nor for itself hath any care;

But for another gives it ease.  
And builds a Heaven in Hells despair.

So sung a little Clod of Clay,  
Trodden with the cattles feet; (1-6)

The Clod is the epitome of an individual that does things for others; the Clod is quite selfless.

Also, the Clod always finds the good in bad and sees their glass as half full. The Clod in Blake's case would be the innocent reader that has not yet been exposed to the brutality of the world and is therefore still a pure piece of humanity. The Clod is still a piece of clay and is forming everyday into the individual they are destined to be, eventually a Clod could become a Pebble but it is not for certain. In opposition to the Clod is the Pebble that is described by:

But a Pebble of the brook.  
Warbled out these metres meet.

Love seeketh only Self to please,  
To bind another to Its delight;  
Joys in anothers loss of ease.  
And builds a Hell in Heavens despite. (7-12)

The Pebble is an individual that is fully formed and matured, the epitome of a mature adult.

Blake describes the Pebble as one who only seeks to please themselves and does not concern themselves with the well-being of the others around them. In addition, the Pebble finds joy in others failure and only wants the best for themselves. The Pebble reverts to seeing their glass half empty and does not look on the bright side of things. Additionally, the Pebble creates negativity rather than trying to find the heavenly aspects of the world. Blake's depiction of contrasting selves that are shown thorough this poem is quite spectacular. Blake is able to capture the extent of innocence and present it in a way in which a reader can relate to and try to find themselves in. He also provides the contrary by showing the other side of humanity and keeps it up to the reader to identify with whichever they find themselves similar to. Blake's

language shifts drastically and allows the reader to see both divided sides of the world and choose which they would be a part of.



### **Concluding Thoughts**

Adulthood is sometimes a very harsh and raw state of being for many individuals. People have to work, face loss, be challenged by daily struggles, face heartbreak, and become independent. When viewing Blake's *Songs of Experience* from a psychoanalytic perspective there is now the ability for a reader to see the importance of: loss of one's imagination, dreams, religion, sexuality, and a shift in language. The development an individual faces by surpassing childhood and entering adulthood affects the individual both physically and mentally. Psychoanalytically viewing Blake's *Songs of Experiences* opens up the minds of readers and allows them to see the true implications of adulthood in the works and the effects it has on the speaker's psyche.

By viewing the psyche's loss of imagination that occurs throughout maturation a reader is able to see the true visualization of reality. In Blake's "Holy Thursday" the speaker suffers from a loss of imagination and has to deal with the realistic elements of life. Psychologically the individual's mind is now forced to see life differently and see realism rather than innocence. Additionally, imagination and this loss of imagination are shown in Blake's paintings of "Infant Joy" and "Infant Sorrow." The contrasting images show the innocent child as happy and guarded while the experienced speaker is now having to be independent and face reality. The experienced child is facing the loss of familial love and is now expected to fend for itself. Blake's depiction of dreams change as well in *Songs of Experience*. Psychoanalytic elements of consciousness and unconsciousness have made this change evident. In "The Angel" there is a mental and physical growth from unrealistic life to real life. Psychoanalytically Blake's depiction of adulthood is shown as a loss of imagination that causes one to consciously face the reality of life.

As an individual matures they either stray away from their religious views or are drawn closer to them due to the experiences they face throughout life. In Blake's *Songs of Experience* religion is shown in the poem "The Tyger." The speaker in this poem is constantly questioning God. The individual's psyche is constantly questioning and this questioning shows the change that may come with maturation and how adults often view religion in a way that either is expecting all questions to be answered opposed to having a child-like mindset. Also, sexuality is prominent throughout the second half of the poems. There is a search for independence therefore a loss of familial love. The speakers are now entering a new world of love and have left behind their familial idea of love. Individual independence is trying to be reached and there is the realization of gender and the implications of gender throughout adulthood. The idea of Freudian family romance is brought up in the second half as well due to the familial bond now being replaced with other love. Psychanalytically one can now see a shift in religious beliefs and sexuality that can occur with age and how that effects a matured individual.

During the shift of childhood to adulthood the way one thinks and the way one acts usually changes. Blake's works provide a parallel to this change through the changing of language throughout both the innocent and experienced poems. In the poem "A Poison Tree," the reader can see the inclusion of death and how the real world that an experienced individual faces is so dark and cruel. Also, in "The Clod and the Pebble" the reader is faced with a divided perspective that provides both innocent and experienced subjects. The reader must decide which type of being they are, whether it is the positive and kind-hearted Clod or the negative and experienced Pebble. Blake's shift in language can show the psychoanalytic shift in mentality when one reaches adulthood opposed to childhood.

By viewing Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* psychoanalytically the reader is able to walk away with newly acquired insight about psychoanalysis and how it is prominent throughout these poems. Blake's inclusion of both conscious and unconscious mind adds to this psychoanalytic viewing. After reading, a reader now knows what an innocent reader would classify as and what Blake's ideal of an innocent reader is. Opposing this, a reader now also knows what an experienced reader is and what Blake deems as an experienced reader. Also, one is able to see what makes an individual the way they are and how the events that occurred throughout one's life impact one's psychological self. I have concluded that all individuals suffer from different experiences as a child that may affect their adulthood. Additionally, I have discovered the shift from childhood to adulthood and how one's psychological self is affected. By psychoanalytically viewing Blake's works I have discovered the unknown importance of imagination, dreams, religion, sexuality, and language that tremendously affect an individual psychologically. Throughout the extensive research I have done regarding Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* I have discovered many fresh, new interpretations of Blake's work through psychoanalysis. In addition to my research there is still much more research to be done and many more conclusions to be drawn regarding Blake. Overall, Blake is a great poet and artist to view psychoanalytically therefore many more individuals should research this topic and add to the conversation in the future.

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